

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia**  
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**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 2b – Sunday morning discussion session**

Question: In this method where you're sitting with the body all the time, if I have a tension, not a pain, and actually see it, and then I try and relax it – should I be doing that or just witnessing it?

Linda: Where are you feeling the tension?

Question: I could find it anywhere: in my thigh, or between shoulder blades, around my mouth, anywhere.

Linda: I feel that – say you're sitting and you feel tension in your shoulders, which is a really common place to feel it – rather than starting to move to try and release that tension, stay still. So keep your body as still as possible and watch your reaction to it.

When you feel tension in your jaw, as soon as you see it, it relaxes and then it will happen again, often. I remember I used to get quite a bit in my jaw. I'd realise I was really holding my jaw so I'd relax that. But other places, don't move to try and release tension. It's a different sort of tension to pure physical tension.

Question: I realise that and I don't move but I still start to focus down onto that tension and try and make it relax without moving it.

Linda: No, don't do that. Just feel it. Watch your reaction to it more than trying to change it in any way.

A lot of things we feel are natural are really learned behaviours. And we've got a deep-seated belief that any tension in the body is bad and shouldn't be there. But when we're sitting here feeling our body you are going to feel tension – really, they're energetic blockages – in the body. The way to eventually cause them to subside is to watch them rather than trying to manually do something. Just watch without trying to do anything. That's often harder than trying to change something – just watching something from a neutral place without doing anything with it.

And it will change, it will move, it will change. Eventually the tension does pretty much go, but I can't say that there's no tension in my body. Often it can be an energetic thing. But most of that emotional tension does go.

Question: I think that's very difficult for me to watch something and not become involved in it. Do you know what I mean?

Linda: Because you essentially feel that you know better and know how you should be feeling and how your body should be and you need to do something to change it. So it is more difficult for everyone to watch something without getting involved and trying to manipulate something.

It's a really good question. Look at it closely but look at your reaction to it more – that feeling of, "This shouldn't be here." Essentially, when you try and change something like that, that's what you're really feeling – "This shouldn't be here. This shouldn't be happening." Whereas it is there and it will be there as long as it needs to be there. The more you struggle with it, you're subtly feeding it by trying to change it. So watch it and breathe into your body. It won't be comfortable but just watch it.

Question: On that note, I notice sometimes when I sit down and I've brought all my shit with me that's been going on, sometimes it just feels good when there's a letting go and I feel tension fall away. But I guess that's a type of manipulation isn't it, trying to drop all the stuff?

Linda: Well, not necessarily. Sometimes you are just going to do that. It's almost like a giving up trying to do anything. It's a subtle thing. I'd say what you're describing is something a bit different. I'm not saying you should hold on to the tension but if it is there – and it will appear when you're sitting – try and allow it to be there for as long as it needs to be there. But what you're describing is more that you're thinking about a whole lot of stuff.

Question: Yes, isn't the tension that builds in the body...

Linda: That's what this shows you. Just because you come here it doesn't mean you're not going to think about stuff that's happening in your own personal world. It's going to go with you wherever you go. But this is a great place to really see it, and see how difficult it is to just leave it and let it go.

Question: I had this interesting intuition that there are parts of our egoic structure that remain invisible to us until they're triggered by certain life circumstances, like the way other people treat us or things that happen to us. Then this invisible thing comes into being and reacts to it and we have the opportunity to sit with it and work with it and be with it. But if the circumstances don't arise, they could sit in us and remain invisible the whole time we do this practice. So I was thinking that's why, in some cases, we see these so-called, highly-developed spiritual people reacting in awful ways. Because they've got hidden parts of their egoic structures that never got brought to light, but then come up in some life circumstances. Is that how it works?

Linda: Yes, I agree totally with that. Whatever state you're in, while you're in the body – this is what I feel – there's still something there. In my experience it's great to have, at times, a normal life – without people sitting in front of me listening to every word I say, probably judging partly what I say but not saying it to me – and having to deal with ordinary-life situations and seeing that yes, I do still get triggered by things at times. It's very different now because it's just very faint residual stuff. But sometimes there is a reaction to something and you have to acknowledge it's there.

If you're in a situation most of the time, like with some teachers where there's a whole lot of people worshipping you, you tend to be in this artificial place where you start to feel that yourself. And there's this pressure for a lot of people, if they have got a lot of people almost worshipping them, to feel that they need to live up to that as well. So when they do see things in them, which I'm sure

most people do, they repress it to a degree because they feel it shouldn't be there and their responsibility is to be completely pure.

What I feel now is that if I do get triggered by something I feel sort of happy about it, whereas before it was horrible and I'd suffer. Now, it might be uncomfortable, but what it means is that there's this chance to go even more deeply into this. And in life situations you are going to encounter that. You could also encounter it in any situation, whether you're living in a monastery or an ashram or whatever, as well. But it is good to be in places where nobody knows who you are; you're just this human being walking down the street and they just treat you as a middle-aged woman or man or whatever. You tend to see more things about yourself, and be less precious about yourself as well.

Question: When you're surrounded by people blindly worshiping you, the normal resistance we bump into in everyday life because people are judging us, and that triggers us, is drastically reduced.

Linda: Well, you don't tend to look at yourself anymore, or question your behaviour or ask, "Could that have been done better?" Or you feel that everything that comes out of your mouth is the holy word. 😊 (Laughing) You're just a human being, whatever state you're in.

Question: It's also scary because you don't know what else is lurking there waiting to be triggered by some life circumstances. It seems like can be completely invisible until it's exposed by some situation.

Linda: Well, it turns from fear of what might come up to interest and almost joy at times at something coming up, because it means that this process is endless. If you feel quite amazing and then realise you could go even more deeply into this, which happens more and more, then rather than a hindrance you see it as something that can allow you to go more deeply into it. It's sort of on another level with your reaction to it and the way you handle it and the way you see it and you admit that it is there. It becomes a beautiful opportunity rather than something nasty and horrible, because it goes through very quickly usually. So in that way it's good to not live in this almost-artificial situation all the time.

Question: It would speed things up, living a normal busy life with work and family and children.

Linda: Yes, your kids aren't going to say, "Yes, I'll do whatever you say." (Laughing)

Question: So it brings up a lot of stuff more quickly to work with.

Linda: Yes, I feel it does. I feel that this way of doing it where you have situations like this which are beneficial and necessary and amazing; you're in a group of people who are all doing this and we haven't got the day-to-day stresses that we do at home. So you do this for a while and then you go back and you test it out in your daily existence, and then you see what's going on. Whereas if you're in a situation like this, different stresses develop but it's not completely natural or healthy to do it like that.

Question: Parts of this egoic structure would never arise if you were in this situation all the time.

Linda: They might arise in different ways, because politics start, but it's sort of different too.

Question: Following on from that, it connects for me with something I've been looking at in the practice and in life, rather than acceptance and endurance, which is perhaps my natural tendency – stoicism or something – I try to remind myself of what Roshi Sama said, "Do your practice with all good grace," and also something from Nisargadatta, "Acceptance, non-resistance, *courage* and endurance..." I realised I'd forgotten the courage bit and was enduring. When I remembered courage and good grace there was a lightening or lifting up, almost stepping into with more welcome, and it softened things for me.

Linda: Yes, it's important – the courage bit – because it does take a lot of courage to do this. And it does give you that, "Okay, I'm going to do it," rather than being pushed down by the whole thing and making it unnecessarily tiresome, unnecessary drudgery. You've got to have the spark of, "Okay, I'm going to do it. I am strong. I can do it." And you go into a sit going, "Yes, I'll take whatever is given to me! I'll sit here and take whatever is given to me."

I like that thing, "Do your practice with all good grace." And also, "Don't try and change the practice to suit yourself." I love that bit. (Laughing) Versus, "I can do it better. I know how to do it."

Question: In my life at the moment I find I'm stepping away more and more from or letting go of things that are agitating or in the way or not necessary. It's not a resistance to them and a hiding from them. It's a moving away from things that don't support me. But I can also see that it would be very easy to stop interacting with people if possible. I could see also that a person could become very isolated. Sometimes I can sense that possibility and it doesn't feel healthy. Other times I think that separation is what has to happen.

Linda: Well, it can happen for a time. It's a really common thing to feel like maybe you're isolating yourself a bit more. But it's just a period of readjusting and you'll come back and interact with people in a different way. Maybe B. was talking about it yesterday. It's a similar thing because being around people you've known for quite a while, they're going to treat you in a certain way – as you – how they've always known you. So you need to make that break for a period just so that you can look more closely at who you are and have that break from that continual pressure of being you. So don't worry about it. You won't become a hermit. But often you need that break for however long. It comes back into balance eventually.

Question: Are you closer to people or more separated from people or are they both the same thing in a way.

Linda: I feel like I'm closer to people, to everyone, to everything, but in a different way to before or what I would have classed as being close before. So it's not necessarily related to the time that I spend with people whereas before it was, to a degree. So yes, I definitely feel closer. So don't worry about it.

Question: Is everything that happens to us on a retreat meant to teach us something, or for us to use in some way?

Linda: Well, it's not just on a retreat. It's everything, whether you're on retreat or not. But you see it more clearly. You get that bit of space when you're on a retreat. Particularly when you're still and sitting, there's no escape – you have to see it – well, most of the time. When you're involved in your

daily life, you're more in that momentum. So yes, on a retreat particularly, but all the time, everything. And that's hard work really, when every little thing is showing you something. It's sort of hard work but it's effortless as well. I don't know if "hard work" is the right word. You stay on high alert all the time where you're looking, watching.

Question: So you have to watch how you're reacting to everything?

Linda: Well, you just naturally do that whereas leading up to that certain point it's more work and you have to keep doing it. Then it becomes just natural.

Question: At first you're not used to doing that.

Linda: Well, you don't feel it's natural. You feel justified in getting angry, justified in reacting to someone – it's always someone else; never you. And then you start to go, "Oh, maybe it's me."

Question: The whole of our life is one big reaction?

Linda: Well, it can be or it can be just... life.

When the reaction and the resistance subside, for the most part, it all becomes very smooth and even the things that are uncomfortable are all part of it and you see that they're all necessary – whatever they are.

Question: And you don't need to feel bad about them. You just accept them all.

Linda: No, well, you accept them to a degree. You can get a bit pissed off at times about things; it doesn't mean you're just going to go, "Oh yes, that's great." You can still get stirred up by something but usually it comes up and then goes.

Question: And you go, "Oh no, it doesn't matter?"

Linda: It doesn't *really* matter. At the time you might get upset about something and then it just goes.

Question: Some things matter like if you lost your livelihood. It seems as if that *would* matter.

Linda: It's like you're living on this edge all the time where you have to be prepared to lose everything any time.

Question: There's nothing you can *do* about it if something big like that happens; it's no good thinking about it.

Linda: Anything can happen at any time.

Question: That's always been a fear – that anything bad could happen to you.

Linda: Well, you don't see it as bad. It might be uncomfortable, not pleasant but you accept that it needs to happen. So you stop dividing things into bad and good, "This is good. This is bad. This person is good. This person is bad."

Question: So you just accept you're meant to have these certain experiences.

Linda: Well, often if you look closely, something happens and you might see it as bad at the time and then later on you see it was perfect.

Question: I don't know that I've ever had that happen. (Laughter)

Linda: You see, "Oh, if this hadn't happened, then this ..." It's all connected. Everyone's obsessed with being happy all the time. You're not going to be happy all the time. It would be boring. We're obsessed with how we feel; we've got to feel good all the time. By doing that we're trying to push anything away that we see as bad.

Question: But why do we want to feel good all the time?

Linda: Because... That's a good question. (Laughter) We're scared of feeling bad. We don't want to die. It all comes down to that; because of fear. (Laughing) "Why do we want to feel good all the time?" That's the question. 😊

Question: We won't accept life just as it comes to us because we're frightened of something. Why are we frightened of life?

Linda: Because we're frightened of death. Once you accept your mortality, "One day I'm going to die. I don't know when," then you're not scared to live.

Question: I suppose that all those things we think are bad are things we think might lead us to death.

Linda: And really, life is leading us to death. You're going to die. It's the only thing you're sure of really – your body is going to die. So we're looking for eternal life but that doesn't mean your body lives forever. The only thing that lasts forever is "now" – it's only now. Every enlightened cell in your body is going to live forever – will always be, will never die.

Question: The enlightened cells? They're different from the other cells? (Yes) So they're not ordinary cells getting enlightened? (Laughter) I never thought of certain parts being enlightened.

Linda: A certain percentage of you realises it's enlightened. What people call the point of enlightenment, is the point where it reaches a certain percentage – I don't know what that percentage is – and you never go back to how you were. And then for the rest of your life you work on becoming more and more enlightened. But then it's not an effort; it's just a natural (progression.)

Question: It's not something separate like what's called the spirit?

Linda: The spirit isn't separate...

Lunch is ready... (Laughter) We can talk about it later if you want...